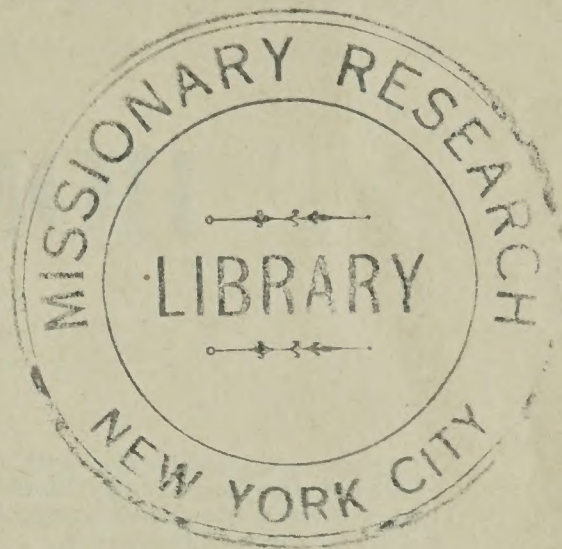


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HOME PASTOR



SPEAKS TO

RETURNED MISSIONARY

By Ansley Cunningham Moore

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By Ansley Cunningham Moore*

HOME PASTOR SPEAKS TO

*Written after consultation with W. Bruce Wilson, member of the Foreign Mission Board of the United Presbyterian Church, and H. Kerr Taylor, formerly educational secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.

WELCOME home! The churches in your native land have learned of your furlough with interest and delight. Your coming has been anticipated by many. Your letters, which are revealing vignettes of your daily life and work, have kept us in touch with you. We thank God often for your courage and daring, and for the faith that enabled you to undertake such a difficult task.

Now that you are back in America and have months ahead of you in the home church, you are naturally thinking of how you can spend your time to the best possible interest of the church and the work you represent. With this in mind, a fellow minister in the home church desires to counsel with you, not with the idea that he is an expert in these matters; but we home pastors are here right along, and during the course of the years we sit in the pew and listen to many returned missionaries. We hear the comments of our people. Perhaps our experience with the American church and with returned missionaries can be of some service to you. Remember that you and we are in the same great work; we represent the same Kingdom purpose and the same Christ is the Lord and Savior of us all. Here the effort is to help orient you so that your coming home will stir a vast interest in the cause of world missions, the primary task of the Christian church.

Since You Went Away

When Americans are out of this country for several years and then return to their homeland, it is important for them to remember that life has flowed on since they went away. Life has a way of doing that. Some customs have changed, styles have changed, and even the atmosphere of the church and perhaps of the country may have changed. Certainly the mood of the masses is likely to be different as this nation has been played

ANSLEY C. MOORE is minister of Sixth United Presbyterian, Pittsburgh, Pa. He was a delegate to the Geneva meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and to the World Council meeting at Amsterdam in 1948. A native of Georgia, he held pastorates there, in Florida and in Alabama before moving to Pittsburgh. He is deeply interested in missions.

upon by the impact of domestic issues and world affairs. Life moves very rapidly in America, as you well know, and even a matter of two or three years makes a real difference. The church is a part of this cultural milieu and therefore is affected in much the same way as other institutions.

The missionary home on furlough will want to remember this and be responsive to it. For some years you perhaps have been living among a people with an entirely different background from ours; their tempo of living, their intellectual outlook, their hopes and fears may be quite different from those here in America. Strangely enough, the more acclimated you became to your adopted country, the more completely you entered into the native life of your new people, the more likely you are to be out of step when you return to America. This is perhaps the reason why some of the most successful missionaries on the foreign field have been known to make the poorest impression on the home church when they returned to tell their tale.

This whole matter of orientation in the home church is important as it affects your usefulness while on furlough. Therefore, this American minister has thought it worth while to write these words in the hope that they will help returning missionaries to be effective in arousing interest in missions with their first-hand, on-the-spot report on the work abroad. Several things come to mind at once which the missionary might remember as he or she accepts speaking engagements in the home churches.

Making Contact

First, it is well for the missionary to talk with a dozen or so intelligent, active laymen and ministers in the home church about American life and American church life before setting out to speak. Such persons would be glad to answer your questions. Ask questions along these lines: What are the growing edges in the American church today? What are the main issues disturbing the churches? What world affairs have the churches been concerned about? What do Americans think *today* of my adopted country? It may be wise to make a memorandum of questions asked you when you are having dinner with your family and friends immediately upon your return. This helps you to make contact with your audiences.

Then before speaking to a particular group, ask specific questions about that group, such as: Who

Missionaries and home-church pastors who read this article will be better able to plan to make best use of opportunities to present missions

RETURNED MISSIONARY

are these people—a missionary society most of whom are already interested in missions, or a mixed group in a Sunday evening supper club to whom missions must be “sold”? Exactly where do I, as the missionary, fit into the program? Am I the main speaker, or will there be others? How much time will be allowed me? Be sure you do not violate this courtesy, as it may be that the minister at some pains has made these arrangements and has worked in this speech on missions over the heads of some, and you must not fail him.

‘Briefing’ Your Listeners

It is wise to give careful attention to the subject matter of your address. No one in his right mind would tell you what to say. That is for you to decide. But we ministers listen to a lot of missionaries and we know some things you ought not to say. No one is interested in what time your boat sailed or what you had for breakfast on the ship. The difficulties of travel, which consume so much of your effort in coming home, are seldom interesting matter for a speech on missions. Many Americans have traveled, too. Remarks made to you on the ship may be interesting, but you don’t have time to tell *everything*, and usually these things contribute little to interest in missions.

Specifically, tell briefly where your adopted country is located. Give a very short summary of its cultural and religious background. Then locate the denominational work, and your own work. Many missionaries erroneously assume that everybody knows these elementary facts. Be definite, but brief, in telling these facts.

Then try to outline the main type of work with which you are familiar, telling only the most important things. After this, you may want to give in terse outline the principal problems of the country and of the Christian work in which the denomination is engaged. All this may be brightened with touches of local color, humor, personal experiences, etc., but the missionary will have to be careful that not all the time is spent telling about one appealing little girl or boy in the mission Sunday school. We have seen the tragic spectacle of able missionaries spending one-third of their total speaking time acknowledging the introduction, mentioning local people of the long ago, and then becoming frustrated under the pressure of trying to cut their speech as they go. American congregations are frequently clock-

minded, and your ability to say a lot in a few words will often mean the difference between getting your message across and failing utterly. It is important that you put “meat” into your address, show some familiarity with trends in your adopted country and with political and economic problems as well as religious matters, as there are many educated people in your American audiences and—please try to remember—many of them are lukewarm on missions.

Fitting In

Small details of your presentation should be thought of ahead of time. Now that churches give much thought to their orders of worship and now that the churches’ programs are so full, it is well to make sure that you fully understand *all* the details before you speak. Arrive ahead of time. Look up the minister. Ask to see the platform and the lectern. Go over the order of worship and learn exactly what to do. Uncertainty or hesitation gives an American audience a feeling that you do not know what you are doing, either here or there! Judge the size of the auditorium and test the public address system, if there is one. Ask about the acoustics. Let someone listen to you speak for a moment or two to see if you can be heard in the rear. You may as well stay home if they can’t hear you. Many missionaries miss out in getting their story to the American church by poor delivery, poor voice, poor timing. Do not read your address. Learn to use notes without a flurry. Keep the illustrations short. Be sure they illustrate; many don’t. We are not being facetious here. We are trying to help you to get the great story of missions over to our people, many of whom do not believe in the cause you represent and many of whom do not care one way or the other. We are so eager for you to succeed! We are so anxious for you to dramatize this great Christian enterprise and win friends for it!

What They’re Thinking

Keep in mind that the impression you make as a Christian character is more important than what you say. People must have the feeling that you are a man or woman of God, that you know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, that you have had a religious experience worth sharing, and that you are engaged in the most urgent and compelling task of our time. It is not enough to reveal that

you can teach people abroad how to run a tractor or speak English or make a dress or cook a meal or care for babies hygienically. This is good, but the audience is often wondering what you have to give *beyond* that. How could this person impart enthusiasm for Christ's cause? is a question often in the minds of listeners. The people will want to feel that you are on intimate speaking terms with your Lord. Tell honestly about the fruit of your work. Are some being won to Him? That is the question.

Make sure that you thank the people graciously for what they have done across the years for missions. Do not let your irritation over the sight of wasted money in America make you forget that some in your audiences have sacrificed magnificently for the work. Make them feel that it was worth doing. The dividends paid these stockholders are not as tangible as a quarterly check, and so they have to be told again and again of the eternal significance of what the Christian church is doing.

Try to maintain a balance in your talk between the devotional and the factual. Yours is not a sermon. It is not a lecture. Usually it is better not to preach a regular sermon when you are invited as a missionary to speak. Yours should properly be a religious address. The religious part is important. It should be devotional in nature so that the hearts of the people will be touched and their wills moved to action. But it should also be factual. People need information about the various fields and the work, but the interest span now is very short since television, radio, newspapers, movies and all forms of advertising scream on every hand for the attention of our people.

A Great Succession

Last of all, remember that you represent a great cause. You stand in a great tradition. Pride is justifiable here. Behind you stand St. Paul, Pantænus, St. Augustine, William Carey, Samuel J.

Mills, Robert Morrison, Adoniram Judson, David Livingstone—immortals all—and you have every reason to be proud, very, very proud. Do not be apologetic. You have heard the call of Christ. Yours have been itching feet and you have set them upon the highways and the high seas of the world that the gospel might be preached. Make the people see that when Christianity is virile, true to its nature, it is always like that. When it settles down, it becomes stagnant and dies. But when it strikes its tent and marches across the world, it remains strong and vibrant. Your missionary address to the home church, if given prayerfully and with finesse, can be a religious experience for your hearers. It should draw them to Christ as Savior, first of all, and then it should drive them to the first responsibility of the Christian: to witness to Christ's saving power to the ends of the earth. David Lloyd George's pointed words are still a challenge to every real preacher: "Religion is humanity's oldest allegiance and will live when all the Ceasars are dead. Prophets, mount your pulpits! The gospel must again today, as in every crisis, save the world."

We pastors will be sitting in the pew listening to you, praying that you will represent Christ and the cause of missions well. It is a fearful responsibility and we feel it deeply when you missionaries are speaking, precisely because we ourselves so often fail. But it is a glorious opportunity.

You no doubt listen to some of us when we visit your fields and you could tell us much about what to say and do, and to leave unsaid. Now that we've had our say, it's your turn.

God bless you, our missionary friends!

Browning caught the sense of the whole thing when he wrote:

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
Never leave growing till the life to come!